

SIR,

I STAND BEFORE YOU AND THIS COURT AS BOTH A GUILTY MAN AND A REMORSEFUL MAN, DEEPLY ASHAMED BY THE AWFUL CHOICES THAT I MADE. THERE'S NO APOLOGY THAT CAN BE EXPRESSED THAT CAN MAKE UP FOR THE HEARTBREAK, PAIN AND CONFUSION CAUSED BY MY ACTIONS TO MY WIFE, KIDS AND PARENTS. THE BROKEN SANCTITY OF MARITAL VOWS CAN NEVER BE REPAIRED AND THE HURT MY FAMILY FELT, AND STILL FEELS, CAN NEVER BE TAKEN BACK. EVERYTHING WE BUILT, WORKED FOR AND CARED ABOUT AS A FAMILY WAS THROWN AWAY BECAUSE OF MY FOOLISH ACTIONS. I AM DISGUSTED WITH MYSELF FOR MY CONDUCT AND WHAT I PUT MY FAMILY THROUGH. MY FAMILY WAS EXPOSED TO VARIOUS INTERVIEWS BY NCIS AND CHIKD TO ENSURE THEIR HEALTH AND SAFETY AND WERE ASKED MULTIPLE QUESTIONS BY NEIGHBORS, PRIOR FRIENDS AND OTHER FAMILY MEMBERS SUBJECTING THEM TO EVEN MORE EMBARRASSMENT AND PAIN. I BECAME THE VERY PERSON MY WIFE AND I TRIED TO PROTECT OUR KIDS FROM. THANKFULLY, MY KIDS WERE PHYSICALLY UNAFFECTED BY MY ACTIONS, BUT I AM AFRAID OF ANY BEHAVIORAL/PSYCHOLOGICAL ISSUES THAT MAY MANIFEST THEMSELVES IN THE FUTURE DUE TO MY LONG TERM ABSENCE AND WHAT THEY KNOW OF MY CRIME. UNKNOWINGLY, MY ACTIONS ALSO BROUGHT FORTH HIDDEN TRAUMATIC WOUNDS IN MY MORN, WHO WAS SEXUALLY ABUSED FOR SEVEN YEARS AS A CHILD AND IT KILLS ME INSIDE KNOWING THAT WHAT I DID BROUGHT THOSE MEMORIES BACK AND HURT HER SO BADLY.

NOTHING, I CAN EVER SAY CAN EXPLAIN THE BETRAYAL OF TRUST TO THE AMERICAN PEOPLE OR TO MY BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN ARMS. I LIED TO MY FAMILY AND COWORKERS AND WHILE I KNEW THAT WHAT I WAS DOING WAS MORALLY REPREENSIBLE, I STILL CHOSE A DARK PATH THAT WASN'T GOING TO LEAD ME ANYWHERE GOOD, LEADING TO ME STANDING BEFORE YOU TODAY. I AM EXTREMELY THANKFUL HOWEVER THAT AN ACTUAL MINOR WAS NOT INVOLVED AND I NOW UNDERSTAND THAT EVEN THOUGH I WAS COMMUNICATING WITH AN AGENT, THERE WAS THE VERY REAL POSSIBILITY I COULD HAVE BEEN ENDANGERING A MINOR BY CONTRIBUTING TO THE VERY REAL DANGER OF HUMAN SEX TRAFFICKING. I KNOW THAT IF SOMEONE HAD DONE TO MY KIDS WHAT I WAS DOING, I WOULD WANT TO SEE THEM IN THE POSITION I AM CURRENTLY IN AND I WOULD WANT JUSTICE FOR THEIR ACTIONS.

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BEING INCARCERATED HAS GIVEN ME A WAY FORWARD AND HAS BROUGHT ME BACK TO WHAT A FATHER AND MEMBER OF SOCIETY SHOULD BE AND HAS LET ME MAKE PEACE WITH GOD, WHILE REFLECTING ON MY SINS AS WELL AS ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS EVERY SINGLE DAY. I BELIEVE IN A CHANCE AT REFORM AND REHABILITATION SO THAT I'LL HAVE ACCESS TO THE TOOLS AND LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THAT WILL ANSWER THE QUESTION OF WHY I DID WHAT I DID, BOTH FOR MYSELF AND EVENTUALLY MY KIDS, AND SO I WILL NEVER PUT MYSELF IN A POSITION LIKE THIS AGAIN. THE PAIN OF KNOWING MY KIDS COULD THEMSELVES TO SLEEP EVERY SINGLE NIGHT WONDERING WHERE I WAS AND WHY; THE PAIN OF HEARING MY WIFE'S HEART BREAK, THE TEARS IN THE DAYS AFTER MY ARREST AND KNOWING THAT SHE HAD TO BE THE STRONG ONE FOR MY KIDS DAY IN AND DAY OUT; THE PAIN OF HEARING MY OWN MOM CRYING ON THE PHONE AS SHE RELIVED THE HORRENDOUS MEMORIES THAT SHE KEPT HIDDEN FROM ME MY ENTIRE LIFE - ALL OF THAT PAIN IS SOMETHING THAT I WILL CARRY WITH ME FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE AND ITS SOMETHING THAT WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN.

I LOST SIGHT OF THE MAN I WAS AND THE MAN I SHOULD STILL BE AND I WISH I COULD TAKE EVERYTHING BACK AND CHANGE THE PAST, BUT THE CHOICES I MADE WILL HAVE LONG, LASTING, REPERCUSSIONS AND RIPPLE EFFECTS FOR MY FAMILY AND I FOR THE REST OF OUR LIVES. EARLIER LAST MONTH, I RECEIVED LETTERS FROM MY KIDS AND DESPITE MY CRIME, DESPITE WHAT I'VE PUT THEM THROUGH, AND DESPITE ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED, THEY STILL LOVE AND SUPPORT ME AND THEY TELL ME THAT I AM STILL THE BEST DAD EVER. THAT TITLE, LOVE AND SUPPORT IS SOMETHING THAT I WILL CONTINUE TO TRY AND EARN EVERY SINGLE DAY.

SIR, I WILLFULLY AND FULLY ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITY FOR MY ACTIONS AND I HUMBLY ACCEPT YOUR JUSTICE.

VERY RESPECTFULLY,

*Michael Cook*

MICHAEL COOK